

Iddhi,pāda Vibhaṅga Sutta

The Discourse on the Analysis of the Bases of Spiritual Power | S 51.20/5:276-281

Theme: Keeping one's meditation balanced

Translated by Piya Tan ©2006

Introduction

1 The Iddhi,pāda Vibhaṅga Sutta (S 51.20) is one of the most instructive texts on the fourfold “path to spiritual power” (*iddhi,pāda*), that is, aspects of meditation practice.¹ It gives an “analysis” of psychic power (*iddhi*) in the classic *vibhaṅga* style.² It shares some significant and unusual features with **the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta** (M 10): the terms “constricted mind” (*sāṅkhitta citta*) (S 51.20.22) and “distracted mind” (*vikkhita citta*) (S 51.20.23), and the 31 parts of the body (S 51.20.25), in the analysis of mind.³

The Sutta's key passage gives an interesting analysis that provides details on the manner of cultivating all four of these factors.

Here, bhikshus, a monk cultivates the basis of psychic power consisting of samadhi due to enthusiasm (<...to energy...to mind...to investigation) and active striving, thinking:

“Thus my enthusiasm will be neither too slack nor too tense, and it will neither be constricted within (due to sloth & torpor) nor be distracted externally (due to sense pleasures).” He abides perceiving before and after:

“As before, so after; as after, so before;
as below, so above; as above, so below;
as by day, so by night; as by night, so by day.”

Thus with heart open and unenveloped, he cultivates a mind imbued with luminosity.

(**Iddhi,pāda Vibhaṅga Sutta**, S 51.20/5:276-278; abridged)

2 The Iddhi,pāda Vibhaṅga Sutta says that these spiritual powers should be progressively moderated so as to avoid the four faults (*catu,dosa*), that is, it is

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| (1) too slack | (<i>atīlīna</i>), |
| (2) too tense | (<i>atipaggahita</i>), |
| (3) narrow [constricted] internally | (<i>ajjhataṃ sāṅkhitta</i>), or |
| (4) distracted externally | (<i>bahiddhā vikkhita</i>). [§§4-7] ⁴ |

3 Bhikkhu Sujato, in *A Swift Pair of Messengers*, gives these instructive observations:

(The paths to success) are various mental qualities which predominate in gaining samadhi. “**Enthusiasm**” [will, *chanda*] is a wholesome mode of desire; not the worldly desire to “be” or “have,” but especially in this context of samadhi, the desire to know. Both enthusiasm and energy are compassed within the path factor of right effort in its role as “requisite of samadhi.” “**Inquiry**” [*vīmaṃsā*] is wisdom in its mode of investigation into the reasons for progress or decline in meditation. “**Mind**” [*citta*] here denotes samadhi itself.

The word “**mind**” (*citta*) is a common synonym for samadhi. It is not defined further here, but as it is a basis for psychic power, there is no doubt as to the meaning.

That a monk without refined, peaceful, tranquil, and unified samadhi could wield the various kinds of psychic power...or witness the evaporation of the poisons [*āsava*]: that is not possible. [A 6.70.1/3:425 f]

¹ For differences btw *iddhi* and *iddhi,pāda*, see **Cattāro Iddhi,pāda** = SD 10.3 Intro (1.1).

² See Sujato, *A History of Mindfulness*, Taipei, 2005:201 f.

³ See **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.34/1:59) = SD 13.3; **Iddhi,pāda Vibhaṅga S** (S 51.20/5:276-278) = SD 28.14.

⁴ S 51.20/5:276-281 = SD 28.14; AA 1:49.

4 The Saṃyutta Commentary explains a key expression, “as before so after; as after so before” (*yathā pure tathā pacchā, yathā pacchā tathā pure*) [§3], as follows:

“**As before so after; as after so before.**” This should be understood: (1) by way of the meditation subject; and (2) by way of the teaching.

(1) By virtue (*vasena; abhinivesa*) of the meditation subject is called “before,” and arhathood is “after.” A monk who, after interpreting the root of meditation subject, does not allow investigation to fall into the four undesirable conditions (overly lax, etc.) goes on to attain arhathood; he is called one who dwells “as before, so after.”

(2) By way of teaching, the head-hairs are “before” and the brain is “after” (among the solid parts in the contemplation of the body).

A bhikkhu who cultivates his meditation from beginning to end without sliding into the four undesirable conditions is called one who dwells “as before, so after.” (SA 3:258)

The academic or scholastic tone is at its best here, merely reflecting (almost tautologously) what is already evident in the text itself. The commentarial interpretation here does not bring out the fullness of the meditation practice described by the Sutta. **Bhikkhu Bodhi** remarks:

The [commentarial] explanation sounds strained. The phrase refers simply to maintaining consistency in attending to the meditation subject in all its aspects throughout the session, from start to finish. See too the use of the phrase in the sentence *pacchāpure saññī cankamāṃ adhiṭtheyyāsi* (A 4:87,2-3), where it seems to have a spatial meaning: “Percipient of what is behind and in front, you should determine on walking back and forth.” (Bodhi S:B 1946 n272)

A very helpful commentary on the Sutta’s key passages is given by the forest monk, **Bhikkhu Sujato**, thus:

“**As below, so above**” is explained in the sutta with reference to the meditation on the parts of the body “upwards from the soles of the feet, and downwards from the tips of the hairs.”

“**As before, so after**” probably refers to evenness in attending to the meditation subject throughout the session. The phrase “well apprehended, well attended, well borne in mind, well penetrated with understanding” is used here just as with the “basis for reviewing,” implying that reviewing and inquiring into causes is a key to developing this evenness.

Given the importance of this inquiry into causes, we might postulate a causal relationship between the bases of psychic power themselves, in line with similar relationships described elsewhere.

Enthusiasm is the wish, the motivation to do the work of purifying the mind. **Effort** is the actual exerting of energy to do the work. The purified **mind** is the result of that work. And in the clarity of the purified mind, the causes and conditions for that purity can be discerned through **inquiry**.

The manner in which these qualities work together may be compared to **an electric light**. Enthusiasm is like the voltage in the circuits. Energy is like the current of electricity which flows when the switch is turned on. The mind is like the globe lighting up. And when the room is lit, it is easy to see what is there. Anyone who has ever had to search [inquiry] for something in a dark room would know that the quickest way, if one must grope in the dark, is to grope first of all for the light switch. (Sujato, *A Swift Pair of Messengers*, 2001:47 f)

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The Discourse on the Analysis of the Bases of Spiritual Power

S 51.20/5:276-281

1 Thus have I heard.

2 Bhikshus, the four bases of spiritual power, when cultivated and often developed, are of great fruit and great benefit.

And how, bhikshus, are the four bases of spiritual power, when cultivated and often developed, are of great fruit and great benefit?

Balancing the bases

3 (1) Here, bhikshus, a monk cultivates the basis for spiritual power that is accomplished in concentration⁵ due to **enthusiasm** [the desire to act] (*chanda*)⁶ and the forces of exertion,⁷ thinking:

⁸“Thus my *enthusiasm* [277] will be neither too slack nor too tense, and it will neither be narrowed internally⁹ nor be distracted externally.¹⁰”

¹¹He dwells perceiving before and after:

“As before, so after; as after, so before;

as below, so above; as above, so below;

as by day, so by night; as by night, so by day.”

Thus with his mind open and unshrouded, he cultivates a mind radiant with light.¹²

(2) Bhikshus, a monk cultivates the basis for spiritual power that is accomplished in concentration due to **energy** (*virīya*)¹³ and the forces of exertion, thinking:

“Thus my *energy* will be neither too slack nor too tense, and it will neither be narrowed internally nor be distracted externally.”

He dwells perceiving before and after:

“As before, so after; as after, so before;

as below, so above; as above, so below;

as by day, so by night; as by night, so by day.”

⁵ “The basis for spiritual power that is accomplished in concentration,” *chanda.samādhi, padhāna, saṅkhāra, samannāgataṃ*.

⁶ “Concentration due to enthusiasm,” *chanda, samādhi*. See foll n & Intro.

⁷ “The forces of exertion,” *padhāna, saṅkhārā*. The whole phrase is *chanda, samādhi, padhāna, saṅkhāra, samannāgataṃ*. See SD 10.3 Intro (1); also **Ceto, khila S** (M 16.26/1:103) = SD 32.14.

⁸ *Iti me chando na ca atilīno bhavissati, na ca atipaggahīto bhavissati, na ca ajjhattaṃ saṅkhitto bhavissati, na ca bahiddhā vikkhitto bhavissati*. Cf “contemplation of the mind” in **Satipaṭṭhāna S** (M 10.34/1:59) = SD 13.3.

⁹ Due to sloth and torpor.

¹⁰ Due to sense pleasures.

¹¹ On this para, see Intro (4).

¹² This para is stock: *Pacchā, pure, saññī ca viharati – yathā pure tathā pacchā, yathā pacchā tathā pure; yathā adho tathā uddham, yathā uddham tathā adho; yathā divā tathā rattim, yathā rattim tathā divā. Iti vivaṭena cetasā aparīyonaddhena sappabhāsaṃ cittaṃ bhāveti*: **Pubba S** (S 51.11/5:263 ×2), **Maha-p, phala S** (S 51.12/5:267 f), **(Iddhi, pāda) Vibhaṅga S** (S 51.20/5:277 ×2, 278), **Magga S** (S 51.21/5:281), **(Iddhi) Moggallāna S** (S 51.31/5:288 ×4), **Tathāgata S** (S 51.32/5:289 ×2). Simply, “as before, so after,” refers to evenness of practice, while “as above, so below,” refers to meditation on the 31 parts. On the meaning of terms here, see **(Iddhi, pāda) Vibhaṅga S** (S 51.20/5:277) = SD 28.14. Cf *Idh’āvuso, bhikkhu āloka, saññaṃ manasi karoti, divā, saññaṃ adhiṭṭhāti yathā divā tathā rattim, yathā rattim tathā divā. Iti vivaṭena cetasā aparīyonaddhena sappabhāsaṃ cittaṃ bhāveti*: **Saṅgīti S** (D 33.1.11(5)/3:223, where it is one of the four cultivations of concentration (*samādhi bhāvanā*); **Samādhi Bhāvanā S** (A 4.44/2:44) = SD 24.1, for context of the meditation; **(Anussati-ṭ, ṭhāna) Udāyi S** (A 6.29/3:322 = SD 24.8. Cf Pm 1:114.

¹³ “Concentration due to energy,” *virīya, samādhi*.

Thus with his mind open and unshrouded, he cultivates a mind radiant with light.

(3) Bhikshus, a monk cultivates the basis for spiritual power that is accomplished in concentration due to **mind** (*citta*)¹⁴ and the forces of exertion, thinking:

“Thus my *mind* will be neither too slack nor too tense, and it will neither be narrowed internally nor be distracted externally.”

He dwells perceiving before and after:

“As before, so after; as after, so before;
as below, so above; as above, so below;
as by day, so by night; as by night, so by day.”

Thus with his mind open and unshrouded, he cultivates a mind radiant with light.

(4) Bhikshus, a monk cultivates the basis for spiritual power that is accomplished in concentration due to **investigation** (*vīmaṃsā*)¹⁵ and the forces of exertion, thinking:

“Thus my *investigation* will be neither too slack nor too tense, and it will neither be narrowed internally nor be distracted externally.”

He dwells perceiving before and after:

“As before, so after; as after, so before;
as below, so above; as above, so below;
as by day, so by night; as by night, so by day.”

Thus with his mind open and unshrouded, he cultivates a mind radiant with light.

(1) Analysis of enthusiasm as a basis

4 And what, bhikshus, is **enthusiasm** that is too slack?

It is the enthusiasm that is accompanied by *laziness*, associated with laziness.¹⁶

This is called enthusiasm that is too slack.

5 And what, bhikshus, is enthusiasm that is too tense?

It is called enthusiasm that is accompanied by *restlessness*, associated with restlessness.

This is the enthusiasm that is too tense.

6 And what, bhikshus, is enthusiasm that is narrowed internally?

It is the enthusiasm that is accompanied by *sloth and torpor*, associated with sloth and torpor.

This is called enthusiasm that is narrowed internally.

7 And what, bhikshus, is enthusiasm that is distracted externally?

It is the enthusiasm that is repeatedly distracted externally, repeatedly scattered, on account of the five cords of sense-pleasure.¹⁷

This is called enthusiasm that is distracted externally.

8 And how, bhikshus, does a monk dwell perceiving before and after, “**As before, so after; as after, so before**”? [278]

Here, bhikshus, the perception of after and before¹⁸ is well grasped by a monk, well attended to mentally, well borne in mind, well penetrated by wisdom.¹⁹

Thus, bhikshus, a monk dwells perceiving before and after, “As before, so after; as after, so before.”

¹⁴ “Concentration due to mind,” *citta,samādhi*.

¹⁵ “Concentration due to investigation,” *vīmaṃsā,samādhi*.

¹⁶ *Yo bhikkhave chando kosajja,sahagato kosajja,sampayutto*. Bodhi: “I usually translate *kosajja* as laziness, but that seems too strong here. What is intended is a slight dullness or feebleness in the force of desire.” (S:B 1945 n271). I take it to mean here that the meditation’s enthusiasm (*chanda*) needs more deliberation, ie, he needs to be more enthusiastic. In actual practice, this simply refers to an almost stagnating level of practice, where more right effort is needed.

¹⁷ *Yo bhikkhave chando bahiddhā pañca,kāma,guṇe ārabhha anuvikkhitto anuvisato*.

¹⁸ *Pacchā,pure saññā*: see Intro (4).

¹⁹ *Idha bhikkhave bhikkhuno pacchā,pure saññā suggahitā hoti sumanasikatā supadhāritā suppaṭividdhā paññāya*.

9 And how, bhikshus, does a monk dwell perceiving before and after, “**As below, so above; as above, so below**”?

Here, bhikshus, a monk reviews²⁰ this very body, wrapped in skin and full of various impurities, from the soles of the feet upwards and from the crown of the head downwards:

‘In this body there are²¹

- (1) head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin;²²
- (2) flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys;²³
- (3) heart, liver, membranes (around the lungs),²⁴ spleen, lungs;²⁵
- (4) large intestines, small intestines, stomach-contents,²⁶ faeces[, brain];²⁷
- (5) bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat;²⁸
- (6) tears, grease, saliva, snot, oil of the joints,²⁹ urine.³⁰

Thus, bhikshus, a monk dwells perceiving before and after, “As below, so above; as above, so below.”

10 And how, bhikshus, does a monk dwell, “**As by day, so by night; as by night, so by day**”?

Here, bhikshus, at night, just as by day, a monk cultivates the basis for spiritual power that is accomplished in concentration due to effort and the forces of exertion,³¹ by way of the same qualities, the same features, the same aspects, even so, he cultivates that same *basis for spiritual power that is accomplished in concentration due to effort and the forces of exertion* by night.

Or, furthermore, just as by night a monk cultivates the basis for spiritual power that is accomplished in concentration due to effort and the forces of exertion, by way of the same qualities, the same features, the same aspects, even so, he cultivates that same *basis for spiritual power that is accomplished in concentration due to effort and the forces of exertion* by day.

Thus, bhikshus, a monk dwells, “As by day, so by night; as by night, so by day.”

11 And how, bhikshus, does a monk, **with his mind open and unshrouded, cultivate a mind radiant with light**?

²⁰ “Reviews,” *paccavekkhati*, see SD 13.1(3.9b).

²¹ In this meditation of parts of the body, groups (1)-(4) constitute the **earth** element (**Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S**, M 62.8/1:421 f); groups (5)-(6) constitute the **water** element (ib M 62.9/1:422). The same sutta describes the **fire** element as *that by which one is warmed, ages, and burns, and that by which what is eaten, drunk, chewed and tasted gets completely digested*, or whatever else that is liquid, liquefied and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself] (M 62.10/1:422); and the **wind** element as *up-going winds [burping], down-going winds, winds in the belly [flatulence], winds that course through the limbs, in-breath and out-breath*, or whatever else that is air, airy and clung to internally and individually [belonging to oneself] (M 62.11/1:422 f). See prec n.

²² *Kesā lomā nakhā dantā taco*. The meditation on these five parts “with skin as the fifth” or “skin pentad” (*taca, pancake kamma-t, ṭhāna*) (Vism 8.50/242) forms the basic spiritual practice first taught to monks at the end of ordination.

²³ *Mamsam nahāru aṭṭhi aṭṭhi, miñjā vakkam*.

²⁴ “Membranes,” alt tr “pleura,” *kilomaka*, ie a pair of membranous sacs surrounding the lungs.

²⁵ *Hadayaṃ yakanam kilomakam pihakam papphasam*.

²⁶ *Udariyam*, lit “that which is in the *udara* (stomach),” sometimes tr as “gorge” (Vism:Ñ 8.120/-122/258 f); technically, this includes chyme (food half-digested by gastric juices, expelled into the duodenum).

²⁷ *Antam anta, guṇam udariyam karisanam*. See M 3:90; KhpA 38. Later traditions add the 32nd part—*matthake mattha, lungam* (lit “the brain in the head”) (Khp 3, Pm 1:6 f; Vism 8.42-144/239-266): “brain” is not listed at S 4:111). Although “brain” is usually listed last, Comys list it as no 20, after “faeces” (KhA 60; Vism 8.126/260) in the set headed by “large intestines” since they have similar or related appearances. For a fascinating discussion on how ancient ascetics obtain such knowledge of the human anatomy, see Zysk 1998:34-37.

²⁸ *Pittam semham pubbo lohitaṃ sedo medo*.

²⁹ *Lasikā*, ie synovial fluid.

³⁰ *Assu vasā kheḷo siṅghāṇikā lasikā muttam*. Here there are a total of 31 parts of the body. See here (4)n.

³¹ *Viriya, samādhi, padhāna, sankhāra, samannāgatam iddhi, pādam*.

Here, bhikshus, the perception of light³² is well grasped by a monk, well attended to mentally, well borne in mind, well penetrated by wisdom.

Thus, bhikshus, a monk, with his mind open and unshrouded, cultivates a mind, radiant with light.
[279]

(2) Analysis of energy as a basis

12 And what, bhikshus, is **energy** that is too slack?

It is the energy that is accompanied by *laziness*, associated with laziness.

This is called energy that is too slack.

13 And what, bhikshus, is energy that is too tense?

It is called energy that is accompanied by *restlessness*, associated with restlessness.

This is the energy that is too tense.

14 And what, bhikshus, is energy that is narrowed internally?

It is the energy that is accompanied by *sloth and torpor*, associated with sloth and torpor.

This is called energy that is narrowed internally.

15 And what, bhikshus, is energy that is distracted externally?

It is the energy that is repeatedly distracted externally, repeatedly scattered, on account of the five cords of sense-pleasure.

This is called energy that is distracted externally.

16 And how, bhikshus, does a monk dwell perceiving before and after, “**As before, so after; as after, so before**”?

Here, bhikshus, the perception of after and before is well grasped by a monk, well attended to mentally, well borne in mind, well penetrated by wisdom.

Thus, bhikshus, a monk dwells perceiving before and after, “As before, so after; as after, so before.”

17 And how, bhikshus, does a monk dwell perceiving before and after, “**As below, so above; as above, so below**”?

Here, bhikshus, a monk reviews this very body, wrapped in skin and full of various impurities, from the soles of the feet upwards and from the crown of the head downwards:

‘In this body there are

- (1) head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin;
- (2) flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys;
- (3) heart, liver, membranes (around the lungs), spleen, lungs;
- (4) large intestines, small intestines, stomach-contents, faeces;
- (5) bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat;
- (6) tears, grease, saliva, snot, oil of the joints, urine.’

Thus, bhikshus, a monk dwells perceiving before and after, “As below, so above; as above, so below.”

18 And how, bhikshus, does a monk dwell, “**As by day, so by night; as by night, so by day**”?

Here, bhikshus, at night, just as by day a monk cultivates the basis for spiritual power that is accomplished in concentration due to effort and the forces of exertion, by way of the same qualities, the same features, the same aspects, even so, he cultivates that same *basis for spiritual power that is accomplished in concentration due to effort and the forces of exertion* by night.

Or, furthermore, just as by night a monk cultivates the basis for spiritual power that is accomplished in concentration due to effort and the forces of exertion, by way of the same qualities, the same features,

³² *Āloka,saññā*. **Samādhi Bhāvanā S** (A 4.41/2 :44-46 = SD 24.1) prescribes the perception of light for the attainment of “knowledge and vision,” def as *the divine eye* (ie, the psychic power of clairvoyance and the knowledge of the working of karma and rebirth): see eg **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2.97 f/1:82 f) = SD 8.10. However, the perception of light is also efficacious in more a mundane way, such as the overcoming of drowsiness, as prescribed in **Pacalā S** (A 7.58.7/4:86) = SD 4.11.

the same aspects, even so, he cultivates that same *basis for spiritual power that is accomplished in concentration due to effort and the forces of exertion* by day.

Thus, bhikshus, a monk dwells, “As by day, so by night; as by night, so by day.”

19 And how, bhikshus, does a monk dwell **with his mind open and unshrouded, he cultivates a mind, radiant with light?**

Here, bhikshus, the perception of light is well grasped by a monk, well attended to mentally, well borne in mind, well penetrated by wisdom.

Thus, bhikshus, a monk, with his mind open and unshrouded, cultivates a mind, radiant with light.

(3) Analysis of mind as a basis

20 And what, bhikshus, is **the mind** that is too slack?

It is the mind that is accompanied by *laziness*, associated with laziness.

This is called the mind that is too slack.

21 And what, bhikshus, is the mind that is too tense?

It is called the mind that is accompanied by *restlessness*, associated with restlessness.

This is the mind that is too tense.

22 And what, bhikshus, is the mind that is narrowed [constricted] internally?

It is the mind that is accompanied by *sloth and torpor*, associated with sloth and torpor.

This is called the mind that is narrowed internally. [280]

23 And what, bhikshus, is the mind that is distracted [scattered] externally?

It is the mind that is repeatedly distracted externally, repeatedly scattered, on account of the five cords of sense-pleasure.

This is called the mind that is distracted externally.

24 And how, bhikshus, does a monk dwell perceiving before and after, “**As before, so after; as after, so before**”?

Here, bhikshus, the perception of after and before is well grasped by a monk, well attended to mentally, well borne in mind, well penetrated by wisdom.

Thus, bhikshus, a monk dwells perceiving before and after, “As before, so after; as after, so before.”

25 And how, bhikshus, does a monk dwell perceiving before and after, “**As below, so above; as above, so below**”?

Here, bhikshus, a monk reviews this very body, wrapped in skin and full of various impurities, from the soles of the feet upwards and from the crown of the head downwards:

‘In this body there are

- (1) head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin;
- (2) flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys;
- (3) heart, liver, membranes (around the lungs), spleen, lungs;
- (4) large intestines, small intestines, stomach-contents, faeces;
- (5) bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat;
- (6) tears, grease, saliva, snot, oil of the joints, urine.’

Thus, bhikshus, a monk dwells perceiving before and after, “As below, so above; as above, so below.”

26 And how, bhikshus, does a monk dwell, “**As by day, so by night; as by night, so by day**”?

Here, bhikshus, at night, just as by day a monk cultivates the basis for spiritual power that is accomplished in concentration due to effort and the forces of exertion, by way of the same qualities, the same features, the same aspects, even so, he cultivates that same *basis for spiritual power that is accomplished in concentration due to effort and the forces of exertion* by night.

Or, furthermore, just as by night a monk cultivates the basis for spiritual power that is accomplished in concentration due to effort and the forces of exertion, by way of the same qualities, the same features, the same aspects, even so, he cultivates that same *basis for spiritual power that is accomplished in concentration due to effort and the forces of exertion* by day.

Thus, bhikshus, a monk dwells, “As by day, so by night; as by night, so by day.”

27 And how, bhikshus, does a monk dwell **with his mind open and unshrouded, he cultivates a mind, radiant with light?**

Here, bhikshus, the perception of light is well grasped by a monk, well attended to mentally, well borne in mind, well penetrated by wisdom.

Thus, bhikshus, a monk, with his mind open and unshrouded, cultivates a mind, radiant with light.

(4) Analysis of investigation as a basis

28 And what, bhikshus, is **investigation** that is too slack?

It is investigation that is accompanied by *laziness*, associated with laziness.

This is called investigation that is too slack.

29 And what, bhikshus, is investigation that is too tense?

It is called investigation that is accompanied by *restlessness*, associated with restlessness.

This is the investigation that is too tense.

30 And what, bhikshus, is investigation that is narrowed internally?

It is the investigation that is accompanied by *sloth and torpor*, associated with sloth and torpor.

This is called investigation that is narrowed internally.

31 And what, bhikshus, is investigation that is distracted externally?

It is the investigation that is repeatedly distracted externally, repeatedly scattered, on account of the five cords of sense-pleasure.

This is called investigation that is distracted externally.

32 And how, bhikshus, does a monk dwell perceiving before and after, “**As before, so after; as after, so before**”?

Here, bhikshus, the perception of after and before is well grasped by a monk, well attended to mentally, well borne in mind, well penetrated by wisdom.

Thus, bhikshus, a monk dwells perceiving before and after, “As before, so after; as after, so before.”

33 And how, bhikshus, does a monk dwell perceiving before and after, “**As below, so above; as above, so below**”?

Here, bhikshus, a monk reviews this very body, wrapped in skin and full of various impurities, from the soles of the feet upwards and from the crown of the head downwards:

‘In this body there are

- (1) head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin;
- (2) flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys;
- (3) heart, liver, membranes (around the lungs), spleen, lungs;
- (4) large intestines, small intestines, stomach-contents, faeces[, brain];
- (5) bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat;
- (6) tears, grease, saliva, snot, oil of the joints, urine.’

Thus, bhikshus, a monk dwells perceiving before and after, “As below, so above; as above, so below.”

34 And how, bhikshus, does a monk dwell, “**As by day, so by night; as by night, so by day**”?

Here, bhikshus, at night, just as by day a monk cultivates the basis for spiritual power that is accomplished in concentration due to effort and the forces of exertion, by way of the same qualities, the same features, the same aspects, even so, he cultivates that same *basis for spiritual power that is accomplished in concentration due to effort and the forces of exertion* by night.

Or, furthermore, just as by night a monk cultivates the basis for spiritual power that is accomplished in concentration due to effort and the forces of exertion, by way of the same qualities, the same features, the same aspects, even so, he cultivates that same *basis for spiritual power that is accomplished in concentration due to effort and the forces of exertion* by day.

Thus, bhikshus, a monk dwells, “As by day, so by night; as by night, so by day.”

35 And how, bhikshus, does a monk dwell **with his mind open and unshrouded, he cultivates a mind, radiant with light?**

Here, bhikshus, the perception of light is well grasped by a monk, well attended to mentally, well borne in mind, well penetrated by wisdom.

Thus, bhikshus, a monk, with his mind open and unshrouded, cultivates a mind, radiant with light.

Benefits of the spiritual powers: the six direct knowledges

36 Thus, bhikshus, the four bases of spiritual power, when cultivated and often developed in this way, are of great fruit and great benefit.

(1) PSYCHIC POWERS. Bhikshus, when the four bases of spiritual power have been cultivated and often developed in this way, a monk wields³³ the **manifold psychic powers**.³⁴

Having been one he becomes many; having been many he becomes one.

He appears, and vanishes.

He goes unhindered through walls, through ramparts, and through mountains as if through space.

He dives in and out of the earth as if it were water.

He walks on water without sinking as if it were earth.

Sitting cross-legged, he flies through the air like a winged bird.

With his hand he touches and strokes even the sun and the moon, so mighty and powerful.

He has power over his body up to as far as the Brahmā world.

³⁵[**36a** (2) CLAIRAUDIENCE (DIVINE EAR). Bhikshus, when the four bases of spiritual power have been cultivated and often developed in this way, a monk wields **the divine-ear element**,³⁶ purified and surpassing the human, both kinds of sounds: divine and human, whether near or far.

Bhikshus, just as if a man travelling along a highway were to hear the sounds of bheri [conical drum], mridanga [tom-tom],³⁷ conch-shell, cymbals, and dindima [small drum], he would know,

‘That is bheri sound; that is mridanga sound; that is conch sound; that is cymbal sound; that is dindima sound’—even so, bhikshus, with his mind thus *concentrated*, he hears, by means of the divine ear-element, purified and surpassing the human, both kinds of sounds: divine and human, whether near or far.

This, too, bhikshus, is a fruit of recluseship, visible here and now, more excellent than the previous ones and more sublime.

36b (3) MIND-READING. Bhikshus, when the four bases of spiritual power have been cultivated and often developed in this way, a monk wields **the knowledge of mind-reading**.³⁸ He knows the minds of other beings, other individuals, having encompassed them with his own mind.³⁹

He knows a mind with lust as a mind with lust,

and a mind without lust as a mind without lust.

He knows a mind with aversion as a mind with aversion,

and a mind without aversion as a mind without aversion.

He knows a mind with delusion as a mind with delusion,

and a mind without delusion as a mind without delusion.

He knows a contracted mind [due to sloth and torpor] as a contracted mind,

and a distracted mind [due to restlessness and worry] as a distracted mind.

He knows an exalted mind [through the lower or higher dhyana] as an exalted mind,

³³ *Paccanubhoti*.

³⁴ *Iddhi, vidhā*. Cf **Kevalāḍḍha S** (D 11.5) where the Buddha disapproves of exhibiting such powers. On psychic powers, see **Miracles** = SD 27.5a.

³⁵ From here right through **36e** is noted by a *peyyāla*: *Cha pi abhiññāya vitthāretabbā* (“the six direct knowledges should be elaborated”), and has been coopted from **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2.89-98/1:77-84) = SD 8.10, which also has graphic similes here omitted.

³⁶ “Divine-ear element,” *dibba, sota, dhātu*, clairaudience.

³⁷ “Mridanga,” *mutiṅgā*, v1 *mudiṅgā* (V 1:15, S 2:267). See **Āṇi S** (S 20.7.2/2:266) = SD 11.13.

³⁸ *Parassa ceto, pariya, ñāṇa*. On mind-reading, see **Miracles** = SD 27.5a (5.3).

³⁹ The following section (italicized) is a list of mental states is apparently taken from **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22.12-/2:299 = M 10.34/1:59), where it fits more appropriately. (Walshe, D:W 546 n131). On another def of mind-reading (4 kinds), see **Sampasādaniya S** (D 28.6/3:103 f) = SD 14.10.

*and an unexalted mind [not developed by dhyana] as an unexalted mind.
 He knows a surpassable mind as a surpassable mind,
 and an unsurpassable mind as an unsurpassable mind⁴⁰.
 He knows a concentrated mind as a concentrated mind,
 and an unconcentrated mind as an unconcentrated mind.
 He knows a released mind as a released mind,
 and an unreleased mind as an unreleased mind.*

36c (4) THE RECOLLECTION OF PAST LIVES. Bhikshus, when the four bases of spiritual power have been cultivated and often developed in this way, a monk wields **the knowledge of the recollection of past lives**.⁴¹ He recollects manifold past existence, that is to say, one birth, two births, three births, four births, five births, ten births, twenty births, thirty births, forty births, fifty births, one hundred births, one thousand births, one hundred thousand births, many aeons of cosmic contraction, many aeons of cosmic expansion, many aeons of cosmic contraction and expansion, thus:

‘There I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of joy and pain, such the end of my life. Passing away from that state, I re-rose there. There too I had such a name, belonged to such a clan, had such an appearance. Such was my food, such my experience of joy and pain, such my life-span. Passing away from that state, I re-rose here.’

36d (5) THE KNOWLEDGE OF REBIRTH (OF OTHERS). Bhikshus, when the four bases of spiritual power have been cultivated and often developed in this way, a monk wields **the knowledge of the passing away and re-arising of beings**.⁴² He sees—by means of the divine eye [clairvoyance],⁴³ purified and surpassing the human—beings passing away and re-arising, and he knows how they are inferior and superior, beautiful and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate, *faring in accordance with their karma*:

‘These beings—who were endowed with evil conduct of body, speech, and mind, who reviled the noble ones, held wrong views and undertook actions under the influence of wrong views—after death, when the body has broken up, have re-arisen in a plane of misery, an evil destination, a lower realm, in hell.

But these beings—who were endowed with good conduct of body, speech, and mind, who did not revile the noble ones, who held right views and undertook actions under the influence of right views—after death, when the body has broken up, have reappeared in a happy destination, in heaven.’

Thus, bhikshus, by means of the divine eye, he sees beings passing away and re-arising, and *how they fare according to their karma*.

36e (6) THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE DESTRUCTION OF THE INFLUXES. Bhikshus, when the four bases of spiritual power have been cultivated and often developed in this way, a monk wields **the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes**.⁴⁴

He knows, as it is really is, that

⁴⁰ Unsurpassable (*anuttaram*) mind, probably synonymous with “developed” mind. See D:W 592 n667.

⁴¹ *Pubbe,nivāsanānussati*, lit “recollection of past abiding [existence].” The remainder of this is expanded into 4 sections in **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1.1.31-34/1:13-16 = SD 25.3(76.3)) and 3 sections in **Sampasādaniya S** (D 27.15-17/3:107-112 = SD 10.12). In both cases, each explains how the eternalist view arose.

⁴² *Cutūpapāta ñāṇa*, or “knowledge of rebirth according to karma” (*yathā,kammūpaga ñāṇa*), or “the divine eye” (*dibba,cakkhu*): see foll n.

⁴³ *Dibba,cakkhu*, clairvoyance, not to be confused with the Dharma-eye (*dhamma,cakkhu*) (see n in §104). On the relationship of this knowledge to the 62 grounds for wrong views, see **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1) = SD 25.3(76.3). See pre n.

⁴⁴ *Āsava-k,khaya,ñāṇa*. The term *āsava* (lit “in-flow, out-flow”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as taints (“deadly taints”, RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untr. The Abhidhamma lists four *āsava*: the influx of (1) sense-desire (*kām’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence or becoming (*bhav’āsava*), (3) views (*dīṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16.2.4; Pm 1.442, 561; Dhs §§1096-1100; Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*oghā*) and “yokes” (*yogā*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) [43] is probably older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these *āsavas* is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict under *āsava*.

this is suffering;
 this is the arising of suffering;
 this is the ending of suffering;
 this is the path to the ending of suffering;⁴⁵

these are the influxes;
 this is the arising of the influxes;
 this is the ending of the influxes;
 this is the path to the ending of the influxes.⁴⁶

His mind, thus knowing, thus seeing, is released from the influx of sensual desire, the influx of existence, the influx of ignorance.⁴⁷ With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released (am I)!’ He knows that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life has been lived, done is that which needs to be done. There is nothing further beyond this.’⁴⁸

37 Thus, bhikkhus, when the four bases of spiritual power have been cultivated and often developed in this way, a monk, who having realized direct knowledge for himself here and now, through the destruction of the mental influxes, [281] attain and dwell in the liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom⁴⁹ that are canker-free [that is, he is an arhat].⁵⁰

— evaṃ —

070102; 090622; 091014 DS; 091111; 101212

⁴⁵ These 4 statements on suffering pose an interesting problem: they are not called “noble truths” here (nor in **Ariya,pariyesanā S**, M 26.43). Norman remarks that these four statements, which also likewise appear in **Mahā Saccaka S** (M36.42/1:249), but are not referred to as the noble truths about suffering, “and since they appear to be subordinate to the four statements about the *āsavas*, it is possible that the statements about misery are a later addition [here], which led to a parallel, but inappropriate, set of four statements being evolved about the *āsavas*, to provide a symmetry” (Norman 1990:26). For a discussion on the formulation of the noble truths, see Norman 1982:377-91 & also Schmithausen 1981:205.

⁴⁶ As in **Ariya,pariyesanā S** (M 26.42) = SD 1. On the application of the four noble truth template to both *dukkha* and *āsava* here, see Analayo 2003:224 n28 & SD 17.4(8.4)

⁴⁷ See §97a n.

⁴⁸ *Nāparam itthatāya*: lit. “there is no more of ‘thusness.’” See **Mahānidāna S** (M 15.22) = SD 5.17.

⁴⁹ “The influx-free liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom” (*anāsavaṃ ceto, vimuttiṃ paññā, vimuttiṃ*). In the highest sense, “**liberation of mind**” (*ceto, vimutti*) refers to the fruition of arhathood (*arahatta, phala*), esp the concentration associated with it. In a more restricted sense, it refers to the dhyanic mind in the 4 boundless states (*appamañña*), ie, the divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*). One who is “**liberated by wisdom**” (*paññā, vimutta*) “may not have personally attained the 8 liberations (*vimokkha*), but through seeing with wisdom, his mental influxes are destroyed” (M 70.16/1:478). All arhats are perfectly liberated in the same way from ignorance and suffering, but are distinguished into two types on the basis of their proficiency in concentration. Those who can attain **the 8 liberations** (*aṭṭha, vimokkha*), which include the 4 formless attainments and the attainment of cessation, are called “liberated both ways” (*ubhato, bhāga, vimutta*), ie, liberated from the physical body by means of the formless dhyanas, and from all defilements by the path of arhathood. Arhats like Sāriputta and Moggallāna are “liberated both ways.” The differences between the two types of liberation are given in **Mahā, nidāna S** (D 2:70 f) and **Kiṭṭagiri S** (M 1:477 f). See A 1:60. For full list of the 8 liberations, see **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15.35/2:70 f). See also M 120.37/ 3:103 = SD 3.4.37.

⁵⁰ *Eva bhāvitesu kho bhikkhave bhikkhu catusu iddhi, pādesu evaṃ bahulī, katesu āsavānaṃ khayā anāsavaṃ ceto, vimuttiṃ paññā, vimuttiṃ diṭṭhe* ‘va dhamme sayam abhiññā sacchikatvā upasampajja viharatī ti. Cf **Ānāpāna, sati S** (M 118.9/3:80) = SD 7.13.